

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 PROJECT AND PROPONENTS

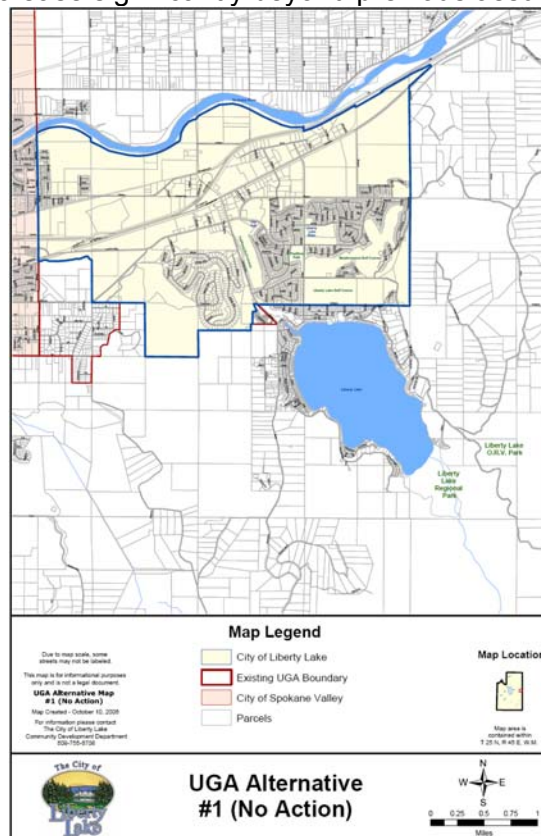
The City of Liberty Lake proposes to update the existing Urban Growth Area (UGA) in accordance with the requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act. This update is intended to accommodate a 20-year projected population of 22,511 in the City of Liberty Lake and adjacent UGA.

The proposed action includes the possible approval of a new Urban Growth Area for the City of Liberty Lake's UGA.

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is intended to provide the basis for environmental review and evaluation of seven alternative growth management scenarios for the City of Liberty Lake and the UGA. As such, this is a non-project, programmatic environmental impact assessment of a range of reasonable alternatives to accommodate the projected population growth. Additional environmental review will be required as specific development projects are proposed and supplements may be necessary for some unanticipated UGA and development regulation changes.

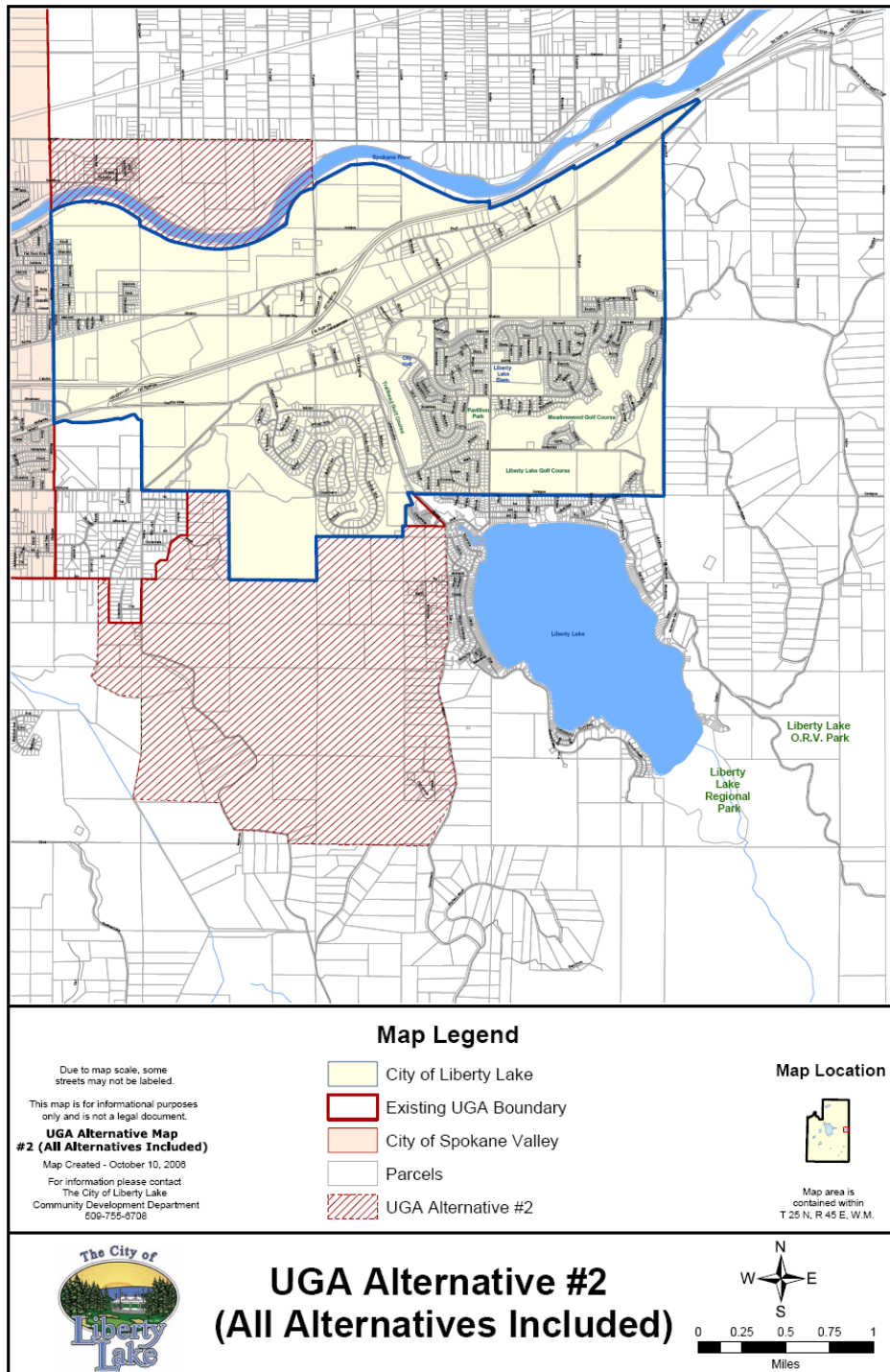
### Description of the Alternatives:

1. No action –This alternative assumes that the projected population would be accommodated within the existing City boundary under current zoning and development regulations. However, density within new development would be required to increase significantly beyond previous assumptions.

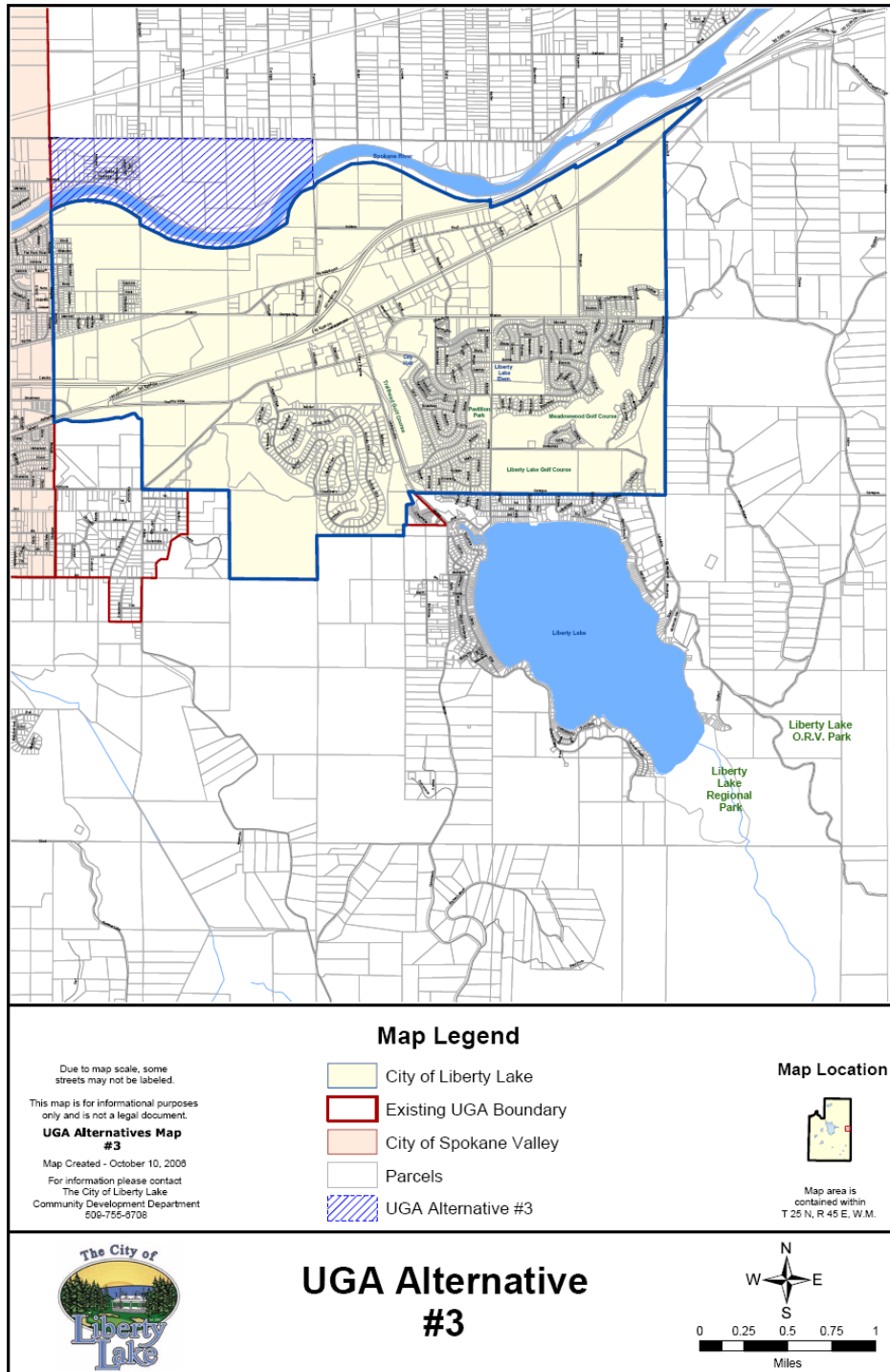


**MAP 1.1**

2. Adjusted UGA- All Alternatives Included – These alternatives looks at accommodating the forecasted growth primarily by adding developable lands to Liberty Lake's UGA and rezoning this land to allow urban levels of development. These alternatives assume that no zoning changes would occur within the City or existing UGA.

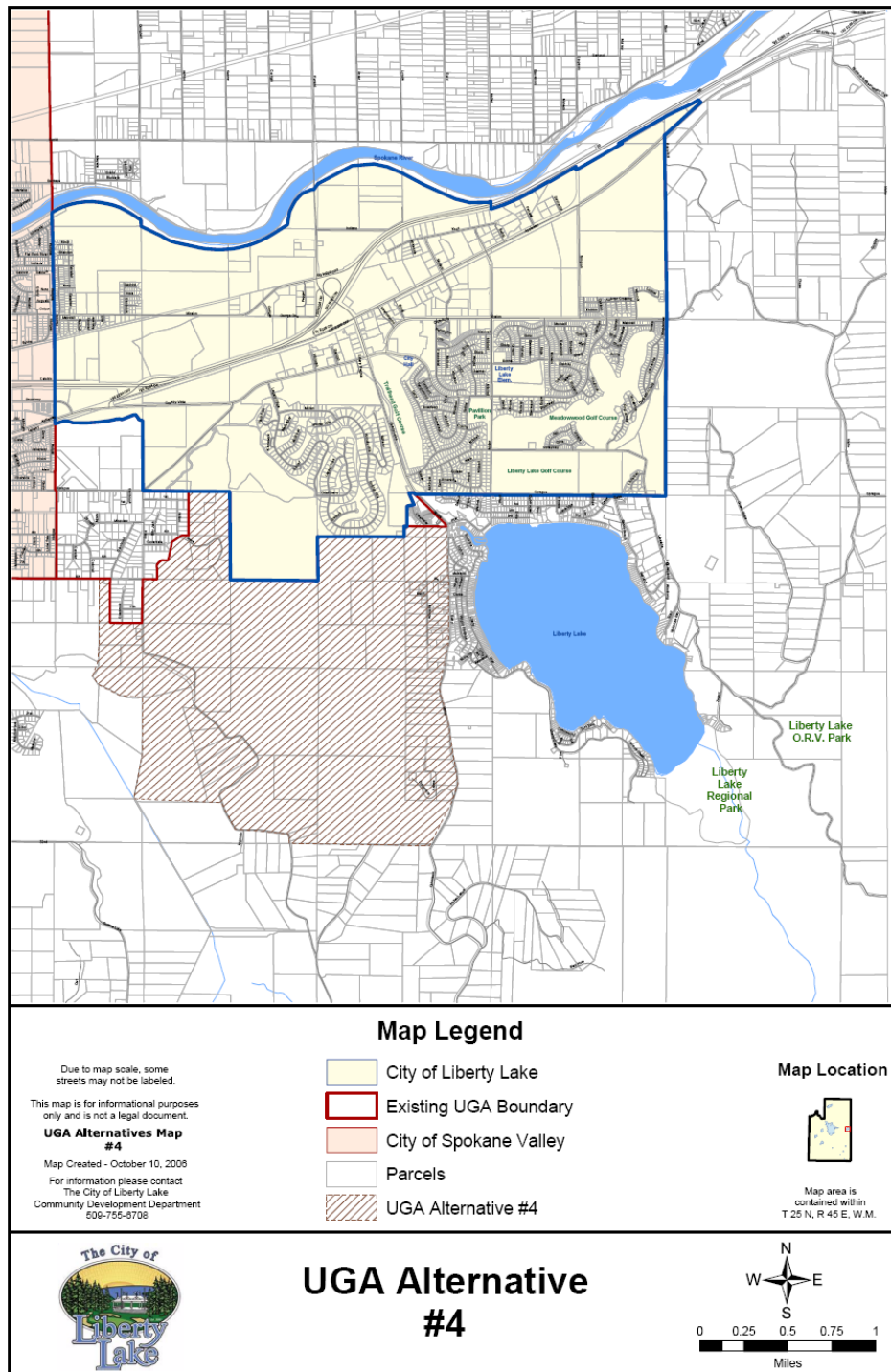


3. Adjusted UGA- NW proposal – This alternative looks at accommodating the forecasted growth primarily by adding developable lands to Liberty Lake's UGA and rezoning this land to allow urban levels of development. This alternative assumes that no zoning changes would occur within the City or existing UGA.



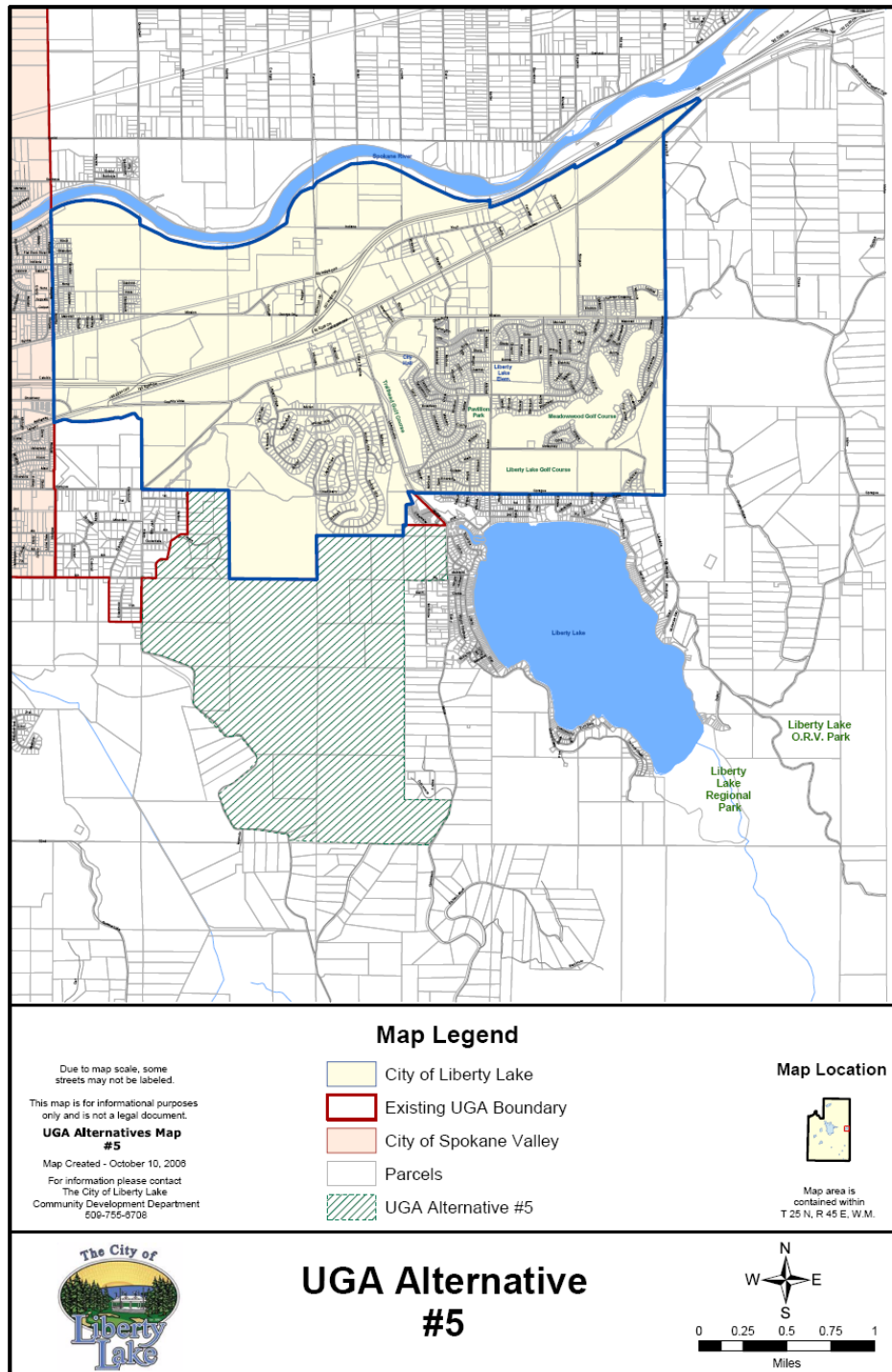
**MAP 1.3**

4. Adjusted UGA- Entire SW proposal – This alternative looks at accommodating the forecasted growth primarily by adding developable lands to Liberty Lake's UGA and rezoning this land to allow urban levels of development. This alternative assumes that no zoning changes would occur within the City or existing UGA.



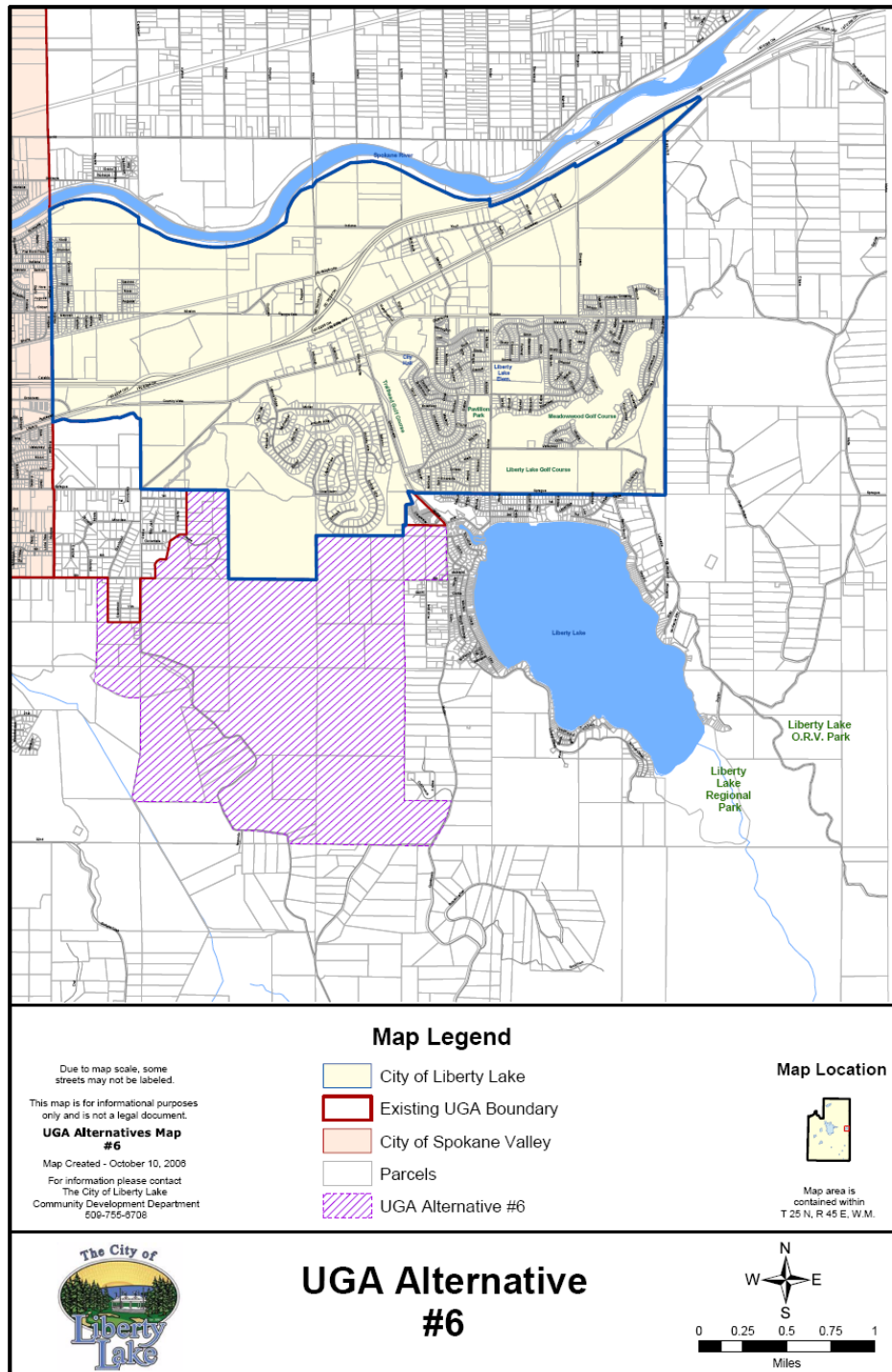


5. Adjusted UGA- SW excluding area east of Garry, west of Henry – This alternative looks at accommodating the forecasted growth primarily by adding developable lands to Liberty Lake's UGA and rezoning this land to allow urban levels of development. This alternative assumes that no zoning changes would occur within the City or existing UGA.



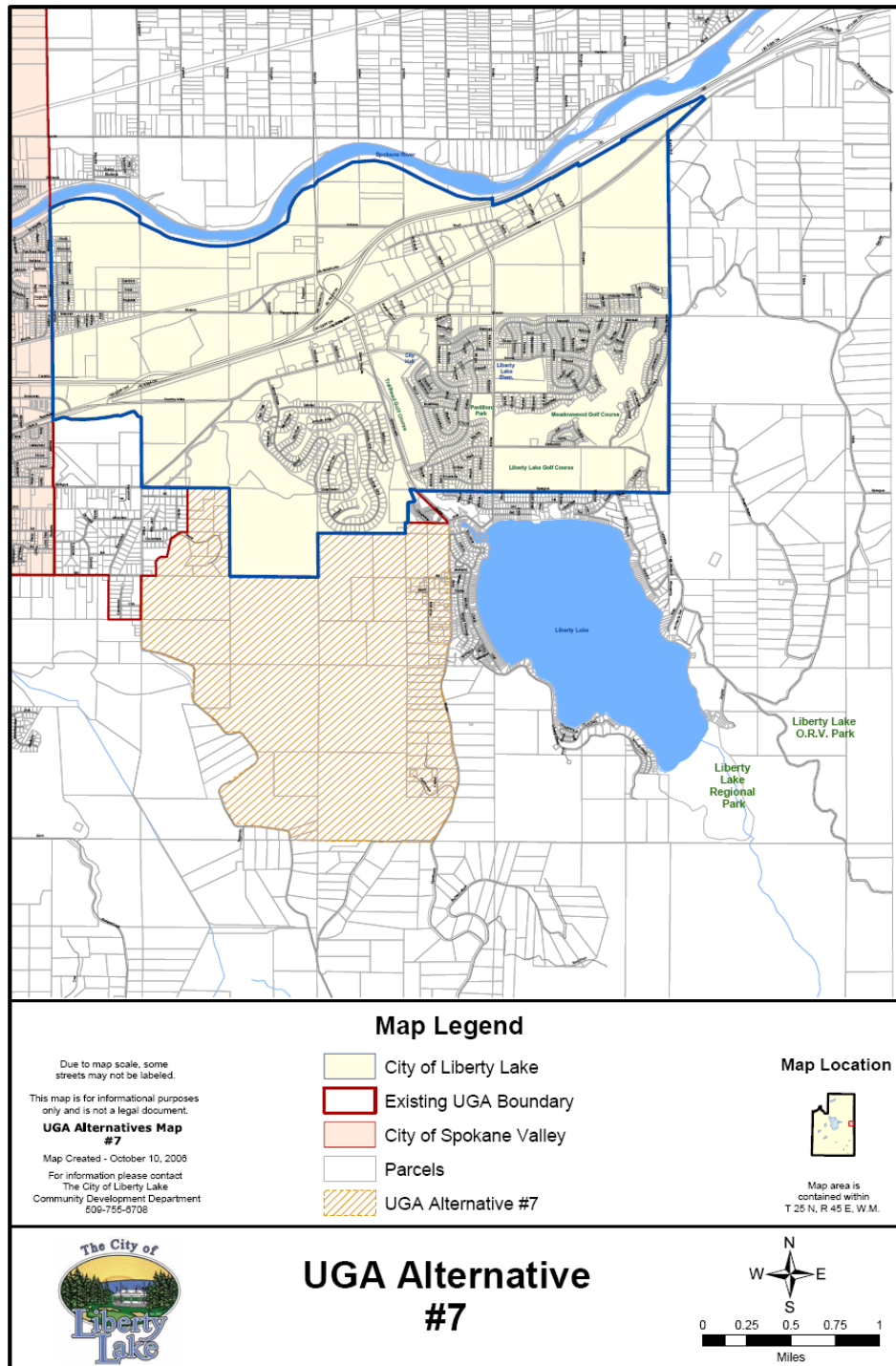
**MAP 1.5**

6. Adjusted UGA- SW excluding area east of Garry – This alternative looks at accommodating the forecasted growth primarily by adding developable lands to Liberty Lake's UGA and rezoning this land to allow urban levels of development. This alternative assumes that no zoning changes would occur within the City or existing UGA.



**MAP 1.6**

7. Adjusted UGA- SW excluding area west of Henry – This alternative looks at accommodating the forecasted growth primarily by adding developable lands to Liberty Lake's UGA and rezoning this land to allow urban levels of development. This alternative assumes that no zoning changes would occur within the City or existing UGA.



## **1.2 LOCATION**

The planning area encompasses the incorporated City limits of Liberty Lake, the current designated UGA, and portions of Spokane County (See maps 1.1 thru 1.7).

Spokane County has established urban growth area boundaries for each City in Spokane County pursuant to the Growth Management Act. The Liberty Lake City Council held a final hearing on the establishment of an Interim Urban Growth Area boundary (IUGA). Three IUGA scenarios had been presented to the public at Planning Commission workshops and hearing in the summer of 2002. After extensive public input, the City Council approved the Planning Commission's recommendation of the existing, status quo scenario. The City planned for the area within current City limits and a Future City Annexation Area (FCAA), located to the northwest of the City limits, which was already contained within the Spokane County UGA. The FCAA was considered a joint planning area with Spokane County. The areas in the FCAA were annexed into the City in 2003 and 2006.

### **Land Area**

The City of Liberty Lake encompasses 3,937 acres (6.15 square miles) of incorporated land east of the City of Spokane Valley, west of the Idaho State line, south of the Spokane River, and north of Liberty Lake. The current UGA encompasses a total of 328 acres (0.5 square miles).

## **1.3 THE POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The policy framework for managing growth and development in the City of Liberty Lake, the UGA, and Spokane County is contained within state and local legislation and adopted plans and policies including: the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), County-wide Planning Policies, Spokane County's Comprehensive Plan, and City of Liberty Lake's Comprehensive Plan. These documents require the City and County to work cooperatively to direct the location, timing, type, and amount of urban growth while addressing aspects of population growth and land supply needs, land use patterns, urban design, housing, environment, parks, open space, trails, public facilities, utilities and transportation systems. The intent of the policy framework is to guide efforts to maintain and enhance the ecological integrity of the area, stimulate economic viability, retain and protect social equity and enhance the overall quality of life within the City of Liberty Lake, the City of Liberty Lake Urban Growth Area, and Spokane County.

### **1.3.1. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA)**

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), adopted in 1990-91 establishes a framework for coordinated and comprehensive planning to help local communities manage their growth in a manner, which makes sense for each community. The GMA guides local governments by providing a full set of planning requirements in establishing their goals, evaluating their community assets, writing comprehensive plans, and carrying out those plans through regulations and innovative techniques to achieve their future vision. The 14 goals and other provisions of the GMA are generally intended to accomplish the following:

- Encourage development in urban areas where public facilities and services can be efficiently provided.
- Discourage the conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low density



development.

- Promote efficient multi-modal transportation systems.
- Assure affordable housing for all income levels and a variety of residential densities and housing types.
- Protect private property rights.
- Provide timely and predictable processing of permits.
- Conserve timber, agricultural and mineral resource lands.
- Protect critical areas and the environment.
- Provide open space and recreational opportunities.
- Coordinate economic development.
- Coordinate planning among neighboring jurisdictions.
- Provide adequate public facilities and services to serve new growth.
- Provide early and continuous public participation in the planning process.
- Protect shorelines.

### **1.3.2. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)**

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) was enacted by the state legislature in 1971 as RCW 43.21c. It requires local governments to evaluate the environmental impacts that may result from actions they approve or undertake. Projects that are not direct proposals for development, such as the adoption of code language or a new program, are called “non-project actions” and they also require review under SEPA.

Projects or non-project actions that are expected to have significant impacts require the most analysis, typically in the form of an environmental impact statement (EIS). EISs require agencies to compare impacts from the proposed action against impacts from one or more alternatives, of which one of the alternatives must be the option of not doing the project. The expansion of urban growth boundaries (a non-project action) requires a greater level of analysis, which is why the City has prepared an EIS.

### **1.3.3. County-wide Planning Policies**

In accordance with the requirements of GMA, County-wide Planning Policies were adopted by Spokane County December 22, 1994 and most recently amended December 14, 2004. The county-wide planning policies establish a county-wide framework for developing and adopting City and county comprehensive plans and are intended to assure that City and county plans are consistent.

These policies address issues that affect the county as a whole including citizen involvement in planning; designation of and planning in urban growth areas; affordable housing; open space/greenbelt corridors; economic development and employment; transportation; siting of public facilities; impact fees; intergovernmental cooperation; water quality and quantity; fiscal impact; and private property rights.

### **1.3.4. The City of Liberty Lake Comprehensive Plan 2003-2022**

The City of Liberty Lake’s Comprehensive Plan is a comprehensive, integrated, and internally consistent document intended to promote economic vitality and the wise use of land.

Its goals and policies are also intended to strengthen job creation and retention, support and increase the local tax base, encourage affordable housing, and protect the unique natural features and environment that make the City of Liberty Lake a desirable place to live and work. The plan guides change and creates scenarios for future growth and development. It recognizes that planning is an active, continuous process that must be

flexible enough to accommodate new information, new concepts, and new community needs.

The plan contains Land Use; Housing; Urban Design & Community Character; Economic Development; Natural Environment; Cultural & Historical Resources; Transportation; Capital Facilities; Utilities; Community and Human Services; Essential Public Facilities; and Parks, Recreation and Open Space elements and includes background information and a set of community goals and policies. The plan addresses the adopted County-wide Planning Policies. It provides the basis for review of the City of Liberty Lake's land use designation maps, the City Development Code, the six-year Capital Facilities Plan, and other land use regulatory ordinances of the City of Liberty Lake.

#### **1.4 Population Growth**

The population has increased significantly in the Liberty Lake community over the past decade. Between 1996 and 2006, population in Spokane County grew by 37,300 people or 9.18%. In Liberty Lake, during the same period of time, the population within the original incorporated boundary grew by almost 4,165 people. Liberty Lake's share accounted for 11.16% of the county's total growth.

The Washington State Growth Management Act requires cities and counties to adopt comprehensive plans and set urban growth area boundaries to accommodate the projected population, housing and job growth. The population growth projections must be within the range provided by the State Office of Financial Management (OFM). Growth forecasts help communities to plan for land use, transportation, environmental protection, neighborhood character, school capacity, parks and open space, and affordable housing to meet the needs of the projected population. See Chapter 3 for specific population growth information and analysis.

#### **1.5 Project Objectives**

The proposed action includes the eventual adoption of updated City and county policy documents, zoning and other regulations that are used to guide and manage growth and development. These documents include the Liberty Lake Comprehensive Plan and Spokane County Comprehensive Plan. The updates are required by state law to accommodate projected 20-year population, housing and employment growth. The purposes of these planning efforts are to:

1. Manage growth in Liberty Lake, the Liberty Lake UGA, and the surrounding rural areas. The City's population is expected to grow by approximately 15,586 people over the coming 20 years. City and county staff are working to plan for and manage the forecasted growth according to the requirements of the GMA and the goals and policies in the City and county comprehensive plans.
2. Guide planning decisions and the physical development in the City and in areas adjacent to the City limits so that the forecasted growth occurs in designated areas where the necessary public facilities and services can be efficiently provided. The City and county comprehensive plans have adopted goals to limit growth in rural areas, environmentally sensitive areas, and on key agricultural or resource lands.
3. Encourage a smooth transition from County jurisdiction to City jurisdiction as both developed and undeveloped areas within the UGA are annexed to the City. The plan recognizes that the City is the appropriate provider of urban services as required by the state GMA and local policy.

4. Provide certainty to residents, property owners, developers and the community regarding the nature and extent of future development in Liberty Lake and in the City's UGA.
5. Provide a positive and appropriate transition from urban to rural land uses.
6. Encourage cooperation between City and county governments.
7. Provide for consistent development standards and one permitting agency.
8. Implement adopted policy documents such as the City and County comprehensive plans, the interlocal cooperation agreement and the Countywide Planning Policies.

The City and county comprehensive plans address land use, housing, transportation, parks and open space, capital facilities and utilities. They were developed for use by citizens, planners, developers, and elected officials as a statement of intent and as a guide for future land use development by providing goals and policies that are designed to accommodate anticipated growth and development in Liberty Lake and the UGA. The City and County will use the versions of these plans to guide the physical development of the community and decisions concerning the expenditure of funds for capital improvement projects.

Finally, the updated plans will be used to guide the development of programs, regulations, procedures, and activities necessary to carry out the plan goals and policies.

## **1.6 Summary of the Proposal and the Alternatives Considered**

The seven alternative growth scenarios reflect varying degrees of possible residential development. Various elements of the alternatives are not mutually exclusive and may be combined in a preferred alternative to be determined through the public process by the City and Spokane County.

It should be noted that under each of the seven alternatives, projected population growth remains constant and is based on an adopted population projection of 22,511 residents for the City of Liberty Lake by the year 2026.

### Alternative One (No Action)

Under this no action alternative, the forecasted population growth would be accommodated on vacant lands within existing City boundary. No changes to current zoning, environmental and other development regulations would occur. However, density within new development would be required to increase significantly beyond previous assumptions. All new development would require a minimum net density of approximately 6 dwelling units per acre. The No Action alternative is required by SEPA for the purposes of analysis.

### Alternatives Two through Seven (Adjusted UGA)

These alternatives propose adjusting the existing UGA to create a larger urban growth area to accommodate anticipated growth. This alternative assumes that no zoning changes or density assumptions would be made in the City or existing UGA. Existing county zoning would be reviewed to identify areas appropriate for commercial, industrial, mixed use or urban density residential development. Several property owners in these areas requested inclusion of these areas in the UGA. The City agreed to evaluate these areas as part of the UGA update process.

## Summary Evaluation of the Growth Alternatives

The 20-year population growth forecast adopted by the City is used throughout this DEIS. The method by which the City accommodates this growth, however, is different under each of the growth alternatives. The population of City of Liberty Lake and the UGA is expected to increase to reach a total population of 22,511 by the year 2026. See Chapter 3 for a detailed evaluation of the alternatives.

### ***Alternative 1 - No Action***

Under this no action alternative, the forecasted 20-year population growth would be accommodated on vacant and unused lands within existing City boundary. No changes to current zoning, environmental or other development regulations would occur (See Map 1.1)

#### Residential Development

New residential development would occur where vacant land is available.

Development patterns in the City and UGA would require increased density in all new development. The resulting residential development would likely be a mixture of higher density with detached single-family homes, multi-family, and mixed use. New residential development would be concentrated in new neighborhoods that have the majority of the vacant single, mixed, and multi-family zoned land supply and within mixed use zones.

In the existing UGA, development would continue under current zoning and development regulations.

### Summary of the No Action Alternative

Adoption of the No Action alternative would require the City to increase existing development patterns and density assumptions in order for the land to accommodate the forecasted 20-year growth in population and housing. As a result, new development would be required to meet a minimum net density of 6 dwelling units or greater per acre as compared with current development patterns and assumptions of a minimum of net density of 4 dwelling units per acre.

### ***Alternatives 2 through 7 - Adjusted UGA***

This alternative assumes that no zoning changes would be made within the City or UGA (as described under the No Action alternative). Under this alternative, the UGA boundary would be expanded to include additional vacant land needed to accommodate the projected growth. However, under Alternatives 3-7, residential density would need to increase within City limits. These Alternatives examine several areas outside the existing UGA boundaries for potential inclusion in an expanded UGA (See Maps 1.2 through 1.7.).

### Summary of the Adjusted UGA Boundary Alternative

The strategies contained in these alternatives are supported by the goals and policies in the Growth Management Act, the City Comprehensive Plan, and County-wide Planning Policies providing development occurs at an urban density and without reductions of adopted levels of service (LOS). Adding lands to the existing Urban Growth Areas must be supported with a full array of urban services and be developed to ensure efficient use of services. Specific mitigation measures would be determined at the time a



development proposal is made and could affect the ability for growth to occur in some areas. The City Council will determine the scope of expansion through review of analysis and public process.